

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Deer Mountain Repeater
Proposed Implementation Date:	August 2008
Proponent:	US Forest Service, Beaverhead National Forest
Location:	Section 35 T13S – R1E
County:	Beaverhead County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The US Forest Service, (Beaverhead /Deer Lodge National Forest) has applied for a Land Use License (LUL) to install a temporary radio repeater station on the top of Deer Mountain in the upper Madison River Valley. The repeater would be used for better communication for Madison District personnel in the Upper Madison and in the Centennial Valley. If the site improves communications, the Forest Service would like to extend the LUL for a ten year license on the Deer Mountain site. In addition if the site is a good location for the repeater and a long term license is secured a fence would be erected around the facility to protect it from livestock and wildlife use.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The following contacts were made during the scoping process for this proposal.

Lessee: Elizabeth Grazing Association
Fish Wildlife and Parks, Bob Brannon
The Nature Conservancy, Nathan Korb

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

No other agencies are involved with this project. However the US Fish and Wildlife Service as well the Montana DNRC would use the repeater for communications when fires or other emergencies occur in the Centennial Valley.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative 1. No Action alternative; USFS would not be allowed to install radio repeater on top of Deer Mountain.

Alternative 2. Action Alternative: Montana DNRC would allow the installation of the radio repeater on Deer Mountain site. The repeater would be used during the remainder of the 2008 field season to determine if the site works well for communications in the upper Madison Valley and in the Centennial Valley.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Installation would have little impact to soils on the site. The NRCS has not completed soil surveys in this area to date. The site was inspected by Dillon Unit Manager and DNRC Archeologist on July 31, 2008. The site is very rocky with scattered patches of grass. A two track road leads to the top of the Mountain. If the proposed repeater was installed it would sit on top of the ground and would cause very little ground disturbance. Disturbed areas would be seeded with a native grass mix.

The Forest Service has written up a preliminary weed plan that is made a part of this EA.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

There are no streams or springs at the top of the mountain. Installation would not effect water quality.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Installation would have no effect on air quality.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

An NRIS search revealed no rare plants or cover types at the site of this project. The repeater would sit on top of the ground and would cause little or no ground disturbance. The NRIS did identify two significant plant communities near the Deer Mountain site. The first, a degraded site, named Snowshoe Creek which is immediately north of the Centennial Sandhills. Snowshoe Creek is identified as a degraded state significant community type. The site is approximately 10 air miles from Deer Mountain. This project should not have any effect on Snowshoe Creek due to the lack of disturbance at the project location and the distance from Snowshoe Creek.

The second identified site is Nemesis Mountain where large populations of Payson bladderpod (**Lesquerella paysonii**) have been observed. The survey didn't identify any of the plants on Deer Mountain; however it does mention information gaps in identifying this community type in surrounding areas. Nemesis Mountain is five air miles to the south of Deer Mountain. As mentioned previously installation of the repeater will cause little or no ground disturbance so even if the plant were present it would not disturb the plants growth.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

This proposal would not have any measureable effect on wildlife, birds or fish, thus direct, indirect or cumulative effects are not anticipated with this proposal.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Although Section 35 T 13S – R 1E has not been identified by the Natural Heritage Program as having use by endangered or threatened species the report states that gray wolf, fisher, Canada lynx, marten, wolverine, and grizzly bear may be represented at this site.

Gray Wolf (***Canus Lupus***) Wolves are distributed throughout Southwest Montana. The project would not have any measurable effect on wolf prey or wolves, thus direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are not anticipated.

Wolverine (***Gulo gulo***) Wolverine have relatively continuous habitat within the Gravelly, Greenhorn and Snowcrest mountain ranges. This project falls outside the wolverine range by several miles. The BLM and US Forest Service list the wolverine as a sensitive species. This project would not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on this species.

Fisher (***Martes pennanti***) Fisher have relatively continuous habitat within the Gravelly, Greenhorn and Snowcrest mountain ranges. This project falls outside the fisher range. The BLM and forest Service list the fisher as a sensitive species. The fisher primarily lives in heavy timbered lodgepole pine stands. This project is proposed for an open mountain top out of old growth timber. This project would not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on this species.

Marten (***Martes Americana***) This is not a sensitive species and due to the location of this project, on an open mountain top it should cause no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to this species.

Grizzly Bear (***Ursus arctos***) Grizzly Bear use has been observed in the Centennial, and Gravelly mountain ranges. The bears are considered a threatened and endangered species. This project however will not effect grizzly habitat, feed or prey. This project will have no direct, indirect or cumulative effects on this species.

Canada Lynx (***Lynx Canadensis***) Canada Lynx have been observed in the Gravelly Mountains and the project is located within this mountain range. Preferred lynx habitat is marginal for this proposed project area due to a lack of desirable habitat conditions for lynx and their primary prey, snowshoe hares. Because of this there will be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on this species from this project.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Montana DNRC staff Archeologist (Patrick Renee) and Dillon Unit Manager (Tim Egan) visited the site on July 31, 2008. No cultural or paleontological resources were identified during the inspection of the proposed repeater site. Patrick recommended that no additional cultural resource investigative work is needed for this project.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The top of Deer Mountain is rarely visited and is not visible from any population center. Due to the remoteness of the project and the poor access to the location the project should have little effect on the aesthetics of the Centennial Valley or the surrounding area. The repeater sits on the ground and is only a few feet in the air. One would need to be on top of the mountain in order to see it. The site currently has a two tract road that goes to the top of the mountain, there is a barbed wire fence as well and the area is used for cattle grazing.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The repeater should have little or no effect on environmental resources. The section is leased for grazing by the Elizabeth Grazing Association out of Philadelphia, PA. Installation of the repeater will have no effect on the grazing lease.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

No other known projects are currently being planned for this area.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

This project has no known health or safety risks associated with it.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The project will not alter the grazing activities on this section of ground. If a longer term license is sought by the Forest Service they will construct a fence around the facility to protect it from livestock and wildlife use.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

Installation of the repeater would have no effect on quantity and distribution of employment in the area.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The project will not affect local and State tax revenues.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services.

The Forest Service will access the repeater site occasionally throughout the year. This will increase the amount of traffic on the Antelope Basin Rd (FS 056) or Red Rock Pass Rd (FS# 230). The Antelope Basin road is well maintained and the additional traffic will have little or no effect on the road. The Red Rock Pass road however is a two tract road that is in poor condition and can only be used during dry conditions. Eventual maintenance of FS road # 230 may be required to access the repeater site.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The project will not affect zoning in the area and will improve management plans by allowing better communication for administrative use in the Centennial Valley and in the upper Madison River Valley.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

The project will not affect recreational use in the area. It's a remote site with poor access and sees little use except during the hunting season. The project is not in a proposed wilderness area.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

No effect.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No effect.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The repeater will have an effect on the uniqueness of the top of this mountain. From the top of the Deer Mountain one has a beautiful 360 degree view of the Centennial Valley, Gravelly Mountains, and the Madison Range. Although the repeater has a small footprint it will affect the uniqueness of this mountain. The uniqueness of the area however has already been effected by the existence of a two tract road to the top of the mountain and a barbed wire fence that runs all the way to the top of the mountain as well as grazing cattle.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The payment for the initial temporary use of the mountain will be two hundred (\$200.00) dollars.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tim Egan	Date: 8/9/08
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Issue Land Use license to install a radio repeater

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Significant impacts are not anticipated as a result of implementing the proposed project. This is a very small project with very few impacts and no special concerns.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS
 ☐ More Detailed EA
 ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Garry Williams
	Title: Area Manager, Central Land Office
Signature: /S/ Garry Williams	
Date: 8/11/08	



The map shows a topographic view of the Deer Mountain area. The proposed Deer Mountain Repeater Site is marked with a red square and labeled. The site is located on a ridge between Deer Mountain and Antelope Ridge. The map includes contour lines, roads, and water bodies. Key features labeled include: Bear Lake, Lost Lake, Household-Dawson-Walker, Deer Mountain, Deer Mountain Repeater Site, Antelope Creek, Antelope Ridge, Antelope Pass, and Lost Lake. A red dashed line indicates the boundary of the proposed site.

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